

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 DODE-00 PRS-01 EB-07 SCCT-01 /052 W

----- 059439

R 142043Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0340

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 1823

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, MILI, AR

SUBJECT: ROLE OF MILITARY IN PRESENT ARGENTINE POLITICAL SITUATION

REF: A. STATE 55698

B. BUENOS AIRES A 29 OF 12 FEB 75

1. TWO REPORTS CITED IN REF A ARE GENERALLY CONSISTENT WITH OVERALL CONCLUSION OF REF B: I.E. THAT MRS PERON'S SUPPORT IS ERODING AND HER CHANCES OF LASTING AS PRESIDENT THROUGH 1975 ARE NOT GOOD. AS STATED IN REF B, MILITARY ARE NOT THINKING OF TAKING POWER THEMSELVES, BUTH THEY ARE INCREASINGLY TALKING OF POSSIBLE CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTIONS WITHOUT MRS PERON. OTHER POLITICAL SECTORS ARE THINKING IN SAME TERMS. AS YET, HOWEVER, DESPITE WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION WITH MRS PERON AND LOPEZ REGA (AS ILLUSTRATED BY RECENT UCR, MID, PRC AND FEDERALISTA STATEMENTS AS WELL AS PASTORAL LETTER OF ROMAN CATHOLIC HIERARCHY), NO ONE HAS FIRM NOTION OF ALTERNATIVE. UNLESS MRS PERON MAKES SOME SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN WEEKS AHEAD, HOWEVER, ALTERNATIVE WILL DOUBTLESSBE FOUND--ALBIET RELUCTANTLY, SINCE VIRTUALLY ALL MAJOR SECTORS HAD HOPED, AND TO SOME EXTENT STILL HOPE, THAT MRS PERON WOULD PROVE VIABLE SOLUTION UNTIL 1977 ELECTIONS. PERHAPS MOST PLAUSIBLE ALTERNATIVE SPOKEN OF SO FAR ENVISAGES SCENARIO IN WHICH MILITARY, LABOR, MODERATE PERONIST POLITICANS AND UCR ALL JOIN IN "CONVINCING" MRS PERON TO RESIGN IN FAVOR OF LASTIRI. IN SUM, MRS PERON WILL PROBABLY LAST AS PRESIDENT AT LEAST FOR SHORT TERM (1-3 MONTHS), BUT HER MID TERM PROSPECTS (3-9 MONTHS) ARE NOT GOOD.

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2. REPLIES TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS POSED BY REF A ARE GIVEN BELOW:

A. YES. OFFICERS INTERVIEWED DID HAVE STRATEGIC POSITIONS AND COMMAND OF TROOPS. THEY INCLUDED, FOR EXAMPLE, ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF AND COMMANDER OF KEY FIRST CORPS.

B. MILITARY LEADERS HAVE ADJUSTED VERY RAPIDLY TO NEW CONDITIONS. THEY HAVE LINES OF COMMUNICATION TO ALL MAJOR POLITICAL SECTORS, BUT HAVE CONCENTRATED MOST SUCCESSFULLY ON LABOR. AS SOME HAVE PUT IT, MILITARY HAVE THE GUNS AND LABOR THE MASSES OF VOTES. GOVERNMENT CANNOT LAST IF THESE TWO SECTORS TURN ACTIVELY AGAINST IT (WHICH AS OF THIS POINT THEY HAVE NOT).

C. THERE IS NO CONTRADICTION BETWEEN TWO STATEMENTS. AS POINTED OUT IN REFERENCED DAO MESSAGE, "THERE IS VERY LITTLE SUPPORT AMONG THE OFFICER CORPS FOR THE 3 CINCS." AS SUGGESTED, IN MASSERA'S CASE, AS TO SOME EXTENT IN THAT OF THE OTHER TWO, THIS RESULTS LARGELY FROM THE FACT THAT HE IS CONSIDERED TO BE TOO CLOSE TO MRS PERON. IN OTHER WORDS, THE NAVY DOESN'T SUPPORT HER; IF HE CONTINUES TO, THEY WILL NOT SUPPORT HIM EITHER. IT SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED THAT MRS PERON NO LONGER ENJOYS ACTIVE SUPPORT OF MILITARY DOES NOT MEAN THEY ARE YET PREPARED TO MOVE ACTIVELY AGAINST HER (AND, IN ANY EVENT, THEY WILL NOT MOVE ALONE). DISSATISFACTION WITH HER IS AS UNIVERSAL IN MILITARY AS, SAY IN UCR, BUT, AS INDICATED ABOVE, AS YET THEY HAVE NOT YET WORKED OUT A VIABLE ALTERNATIVE.

D. YES. CINCS ARE VERY MUCH AWARE OF DISSENSION IN THE RANKS.

E. AS TO QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT MILITARY HAVE ANY BETTER IDEAS FOR SOLVING PRESSING ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS, THEY PROBABLY DO NOT. QUESTION ITSELF IS NOT REALLY COGENT, HOWEVER, SINCE AT THIS POINT MILITARY HAVE NO INTENTION OF TAKING POWER THEMSELVES.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** ARMED FORCES, INTERVENTION, POLITICAL STABILITY, POLITICAL SITUATION, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 14 MAR 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975BUENOS01823  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750091-0159  
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**Line Count:** 95  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION ARA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 75 STATE 55698  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 02 SEP 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <02 SEP 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <03 SEP 2003 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
05 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ROLE OF MILITARY IN PRESENT ARGENTINE POLITICAL SITUATION  
**TAGS:** PINT, MILI, AR, (PERON, MARIA ESTELA MARTINEZ DE)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006